OCCUPATIONAL

# HEALTH & SAFETY

MAY 2006

# ARE LOST TIME CLAIM RATES STILL A MEASURE OF SUCCESS?

**by Guy R. Kerr**

Employers and workers should be applauded for their hard work to bring down the lost time claim rate. Between 2001 and 2005 that number has moved from 3.1 to 2.6 injuries per 100 person years.

Although the lost time claim rate continues to be an industry measure of safety success, a new trend has emerged that we need to keep an eye on. As you know, Alberta is experiencing some of the best economic times we've had in years. As a result employers are very willing to provide modified work opportunities to workers who get hurt on the job. As a big supporter of the benefits of modified work, I think this is fantastic. Modified work is the best way to keep workers connected to the workplace. It makes them feel valued and, in conjunction with physical rehabilitation, helps them achieve a full return to work sooner.

So what do we have to worry about, you ask?

Well, it seems the lost time claim rate is becoming a weaker measure of injury prevention because of a significant increase in the number of workers on modified work. Statistics show that people are continuing to get hurt; they're just not losing time from work.

Here's what I mean. In 2001 the lost time claim rate sat at 3.1, and modified work was offered to 8.1% (11,891) of injured workers. By 2004 the lost time claim rate was down to 2.6, and the number of workers participating in modified work had shot up to 13.4% (20,715). Many of the people on modified work in 2004 would have been classified as "lost-time claims" in 2001, which means the number of injuries has not in fact gone down.

The only long-term solution to this problem is to reduce injuries, period. From a WCB perspective, a low lost time claim rate and a high number of workers on modified work could create increased risk for us when the economy begins to slow down. Past experience tells us that employers are more willing to provide modified work during good economic times and that when times are tough those opportunities tend to disappear. Many of the workers who are on modified work today would likely lose time from their jobs. That would not only drive up the lost time claim rate; it would also increase claims costs, which translates into higher WCB premiums for employers.

But the future doesn't have to be bleak. There are things you can start working on today that will make a big difference in the long run. Our most important goal has to be to reduce the number of injuries happening at Alberta work sites.

...it seems the lost time claim rate is becoming a weaker measure of injury prevention because of a significant increase in the number of workers on modified work.

From my perspective, when economic times are as good as they are now, it's your best chance to make long-term investments in your health and safety program. Ask your safety and industry associations for advice. Get in touch with employers who are health and safety role models to find out the secrets of their success. Share your best practices with others to improve your industry's overall rating. Do everything in your power to ensure that every single worker goes home each day safe and sound.

How you make it happen is up to you, but the time to act is now. The benefits of your actions today will last Alberta's workers a lifetime.

*Guy R. Kerr is the President & CEO of the Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta.*

OCCUPATIONAL
# HEALTH & SAFETY

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## CENTRE HIGH CAMPUS PARTICIPATES IN WORK SAFE JOINT EDUCATION PROJECT

Centre High Campus in Edmonton serves older students – those who have left the "regular" system, possibly worked for a while and have now decided to finish high school. Consequently, the resources and materials developed by the Work Safe Alberta Joint Education Project (see story on page 14) are "a perfect fit" for this school, says Laurie Sorensen, career centre curriculum coordinator. "Paying attention to safety is a must," Sorensen says, "as many Centre High students are in the workforce."

Centre High, one of eight schools currently field testing resources produced by the Joint Education Project, was pleased to include the Work Safe Passport in its Career Directions event on February 14-15, 2006. Students can use the passport to keep a record of their health and safety training. Career Directions is held at the beginning of each semester as part of Centre High's career planning services for students.

Sharon Chadwick, Alberta Human Resources and Employment (R), and Ray Cimolini, Principal of Centre High (L), launch Work Safe Passport, February 2006.

## CHANGES TO THE OH&S CODE

Alberta Human Resources and Employment reviews suggestions for changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Code every two years.

The current (2005–06) review is making good progress. The department has completed Stages 1 through 3 as described below, and Stage 4 is underway.

- Stage 1: Stakeholder working groups consider suggested changes
- Stage 2: Draft recommendations are compiled and posted on the WHS website for comment
- Stage 3: Working groups consider comments received and finalize recommendations
- Stage 4: Occupational Health & Safety Council reviews/approves and forwards suggested rule changes to the minister for consideration

Approved changes will be posted on the WHS website, www.whs.gov.ab.ca/law/codereview.

*To suggest changes for consideration during the next review cycle, in 2007–08, contact Kenn Hample, phone (780) 415-0648, kenn.hample@gov.ab.ca, by December 31, 2006.*

## NAOSH WEEK APRIL 30 – MAY 6, 2006

*Review. Refresh. Revitalize.*

The Canadian organizers of North American Occupational Safety and Health Week have produced a 16-page resource guide that includes background information as well as suggestions for planning events and informing the community about them. There is also a health and safety checklist for workplaces and a form for ordering NAOSH Week promotional items. The resource guide is downloadable in pdf format at www.naosh.ca/.

Every year in early May, NAOSH Week activities are held in many communities throughout Alberta, Canada and the U.S. This event focuses the attention of employers, employees and the general public on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace and encouraging health and safety programs.

*For more information, go to www.naosh.ca/.*

## HEALTH & SAFETY – A BALANCING ACT

5th Annual Alberta Health & Safety Conference and Trade Fair
November 20–22, 2006
Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton

This event is organized by the Health & Safety Conference Society of Alberta, a not-for profit multi-partner association that includes industry safety organizations, professional organizations, government, the Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta and other related groups.

*For more information, visit the Society's website at www.hsconference.com. Or call (403) 236-2225.*

## WITNESS INTERVIEWS: SHOULD DEFENCE COUNSEL HAVE THE RIGHT TO ATTEND?

Investigators and prosecutors strive to balance the interests of all parties affected by an investigation under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and to exercise their discretion in a fair and unbiased manner. A recent case, Ebsworth v. Her Majesty the Queen (December 21, 2005, Edmonton Court of Queen's Bench), provides a good illustration of the challenges involved.

*For details, see the Reasons for Judgment of Justice Verville at www.whs.gov.ab.ca/prosecutions/pdf/ebsworth_judgment.pdf*

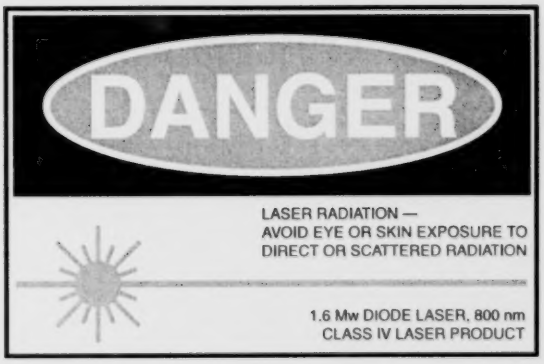
## DOES YOUR RADIATION EQUIPMENT NEED TO BE REGISTERED?

Certain designated radiation equipment in commercial, industrial, educational, research or entertainment facilities must be inspected and registered, including:

- Class 3b and 4 lasers
- the following types of x-ray equipment: diagnostic, diffraction and analytical, cabinet, industrial radiographic, irradiation, security and baggage inspection

The laser radiation emitted directly from Class 3b and Class 4 lasers (for example, laser hair removal devices, welding lasers, cutting lasers, marking lasers and laser light shows) is hazardous to unprotected eyes or skin. Exposure to the reflected or scattered beam may be hazardous under some conditions. The direct beam may also be a fire hazard if it strikes combustible materials.

Handheld x-ray fluorescence analyzers (portable x-ray tubes) used for positive material identification of alloys and metals have an open beam x-ray design. If not used properly, they are capable of delivering a substantial radiation dose to the operator. Operators of this equipment must be certified through the Canadian Non-Destructive Testing Personnel Certification Program administered by Natural Resources Canada. Proof of this certification is required for provincial registration of these analyzers.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Alberta Human Resources and Employment has delegated authority to the University of Calgary to issue registration certificates for designated radiation equipment. You must apply for registration before installing new equipment or operating existing equipment. Radiation equipment that is in transit or in storage and not capable of being energized does not require a registration certificate.

*To register radiation equipment, contact:*
*University of Calgary Environmental Health and Safety*
*Phone (403) 220-7653*
*E-mail ucsafety@ucalgary.ca*

*For more information, see Alberta's Radiation Protection Regulation (182/2003). Go to www.qp.gov.ab.ca, click on the list of regulations and look for the Radiation Protection Regulation.*

# LITERACY AND ESL CHALLENGES AT WORK

**by Norma Ramage**

**How do you keep employees safe when they don't speak English or are unable to read the safety manual?** The Alberta government is predicting a shortfall of 100,000 workers over the next decade as the province's economy continues to surge. More and more companies are identifying a lack of employees as their major economic challenge.

To deal with this worker shortfall, companies are looking overseas for employees and delving more deeply into the available labour pool at home. This, in turn, has created another major challenge: how to deal with workers whose first language isn't English and others whose functional literacy skills have either eroded or are insufficient for today's complex workplace.

The scope of the problem is huge. A recent study by the National Literacy Secretariat found that 40 per cent of Canadians don't have the language skills they need to work effectively and safely. On the other side of the equation, the provincial government hopes to increase the number of immigrant workers who come to Alberta from the 16,000 who arrived in 2004 to 25,000 annually by 2010. But just because those workers have training and accreditation in their own country, doesn't mean they have the English language skills necessary to work safely and effectively in Alberta. How will employers keep their workers safe when they can't read a safety manual or a warning sign?

**Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society**

Dawn Seabrook de Vargas has worked for a decade to help find solutions to these problems. She is an Edmonton-based project manager with the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society, a group formed 10 years ago by business, labour and government to promote the development of a highly literate workforce in Alberta. The recent labour squeeze has made the group's mandate more urgent and important than ever, and it has also helped focus corporate and public attention on its message, says Seabrook de Vargas. "We're helping to create ideas for providing services in the community, and we hope groups and companies will move these ideas along."

> Forty per cent of Canadians don't have the language skills they need to work effectively and safely.

The Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society works directly with industry groups and individual employers to help identify language and literacy issues in the workplace. In 1996, it conducted a research project with the construction industry, holding interviews and reviewing industry expectations for workers around reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy skills. Other studies followed with the Alberta Food Processing Association, Alberta Forest Products Association and Alberta Restaurant and Food Services Association.

"In all of these studies we identified literacy gaps," says Seabrook de Vargas. And she believes these gaps will get larger as the workplace becomes more complex, and health and safety regulations more stringent. "There are huge responsibilities for employers today, especially when you bring health and safety training and regulations into the picture." Due diligence and the requirement of employers

to take responsibility for their employees' understanding of regulations and training programs have also upped the literacy stakes.

In addition to identifying the problem, the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society works with associations and individual companies to find ways to bridge the literacy gap. The agency uses a variety of methods to do this, including the production of training resources that use visuals and plain language.

**English as a Second Language**

Other provincial groups and organizations are working to improve workplace literacy, including Bow Valley College in Calgary and NorQuest College in Edmonton. Bev Simbalist, program coordinator for English as a Second Language at Bow Valley College, says she's getting an increasing number of calls as companies recognize the need for literacy solutions. "Employers today are very interested in keeping their workers. There's more interest in English as a Second Language courses and language upgrading than there was a while ago."

Public and media attention in recent months has focused primarily on problems created by the increasing number of foreign workers who have limited or no English language skills. There are no exact figures for the number of ESL employees working in the province, but some statistics from Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta offer a clue. WCB-Alberta paid a fee for translation services on 303 claims in 2004, and on 289 claims in 2005. But those small numbers don't tell the whole story, says James Wilson, manager, audit and underwriting, at WCB-Alberta. "In many instances we'll see family, friends, the employer or other WCB staff translate for claimants without having any fees processed. " And some claimants don't ask for help; they pass through the system without the WCB being aware of their language difficulties.

Due diligence and the requirement of employers to take responsibility for their employees' understanding of regulations and training programs have also upped the literacy stakes.

The growing number of foreign workers is forcing employers to reassess how they are dealing with English as a Second Language issues, says Marilyn Luft, a project manager with Alberta Workforce Essential Skills in Red Deer. In the past, says Luft, companies often did not offer ESL training but instead translated signs and documents and made limited use of interpreters. Luft, who sees these measures as "band aid solutions," says, "It's wrong to think that just because there's someone on the floor who speaks English as well as the language of some of your workers, you don't need classes. How cost effective and how safe is it to have workers who need translators beside them every minute they are working?"

For employers looking for English as a Second Language assistance, both Bow Valley and NorQuest colleges offer off-site and in-house ESL training programs. Anna DeLuca, dean of language training and adult literacy at NorQuest, says her office is getting requests for training from all industries. They need to train employees across the spectrum, ranging from assembly line workers to engineers. "Professionals like engineers and accountants may speak English, but they may lack the level of skills to write a proper report or make an effective presentation. They may have gaps in their formal language skills."

Off-site ESL programs, even when the employer is paying, can sometimes be a difficult sell, says DeLuca. Many workers are putting in long hours or even holding down two jobs. That's why both Bow Valley and NorQuest offer on-site ESL training. Instructors go to the work site, do a needs assessment and then design the program around the employer's requirements. "Since we can't teach them everything, we try to be very targeted in our approach."

Although NorQuest offers health and safety training, DeLuca says employers haven't requested that as a component of ESL classes, likely because they have their

own health and safety programs. However, she expects that as the need grows this type of training will be integrated into ESL courses.

Companies who opt for on-site ESL training must pick up the costs, as only limited grants are available from government. Employers must also wrestle with the problem of how to get employees to attend the classes, says Bow Valley's Simbalist. "They must decide whether they should make the classes a condition of retaining a job or depend on the employees volunteering."

**The "literacy deficit"**

The language problems of immigrant workers have drawn the most attention, but Alberta's tight job market has raised another concern as well: the reading and writing skills of native-born Canadians. This kind of literacy deficit is a more difficult problem to identify, says Karen Bennett, NorQuest's dean of academics for careers and employment. Many employers are unaware it even exists. People try to cover up their lack of literacy skills, says Bennett. "While there's no stigma in being an immigrant who can't speak English, there is a stigma if you're Canadian-born and don't have adequate literacy skills." She says it's also a tougher sell to go in and talk to companies about their Canadian employees' literacy problems.

Many older workers have lost their language skills over the years, says Bennett, and although the booming job market is offering opportunities for advancement, they simply don't have the communication tools required. "People understand about losing skills when you talk about math. After all, how many of us can do the kind of algebra calculations we did in high school? Your reading and writing skills can also erode. While they may be good enough to read the newspaper, are they sufficient for writing reports or understanding a complicated safety manual?" These workers can continue to function adequately as long as conditions don't change, but if new regulations are introduced or they have to be trained on a new piece of equipment, they may not be able to cope.

Luft says employers should consider the economics of literacy in terms of their ability to retain and promote experienced employees. "An individual needs to have literacy skills to benefit from training."

Luft has another concern. While the strong economy, in particular the energy mega-projects in northern Alberta, have increased opportunities for aboriginal Canadians to enter the workplace, it has also highlighted some literacy problems in this community. The Alberta Aboriginal Apprenticeship Project is an initiative to provide training and help for aboriginals who want to enter and complete an apprenticeship program.

As more companies recognize the need for ESL classes and language upgrading, one obstacle is identifying where to go for help. Says Bow Valley's Simbalist, "Most of the calls I get are, 'Where do I start? How do I do this?'" Help is available from Bow Valley College, NorQuest College, Metro Community College, the Alberta Workplace Essential Skills Society and Alberta Literacy.

One thing appears certain. The provincial economy is predicted to continue its boom for the next few years and the number of foreign workers arriving in Alberta continues to increase. So it's likely that more and more employers will be seeking assistance in dealing with literacy gaps in the workplace.

*Norma Ramage is a freelance writer and communications consultant living in Calgary.*

RESOURCES

**WEB LINKS**

**www.nald.ca/AWES/start.htm**
Alberta Workforce Essential Skills committee

**www.nald.ca/AWES/inaction/action.htm**
Alberta Workforce Essential Skills AWES projects

**www.bowvalleycollege.ca**
Bow Valley College, Calgary

**www.norquest.ab.ca**
NorQuest College, Edmonton

**www.literacy-alberta.ca/literacy.htm**
Literacy Alberta

**www.afl.org/literacy/**
Alberta Federation of Labour literacy site

# ALBERTA EMPLOYERS PROVIDING ESL TRAINING

**by Norma Ramage**

Employers are looking for innovative ways to provide health, safety and other critical workplace information to employees whose first language isn't English. Some translate documents and provide interpreters, either from inside or outside of the company or organization. More and more companies, however, are considering offering English as a Second Language instruction.

If ESL training is the preferred option, several important choices must be made. For example, will you offer instruction on or off-site? Make participation a mandatory condition of employment or a voluntary activity? Pay employees for time spent taking the instruction? Provide instruction that is related solely to the workplace or also applicable to more general situations? Following are brief descriptions of the approaches used by four Alberta companies, now and in the past.

**Haworth**

Haworth Calgary, part of a U.S.-based company that manufactures products for office interiors, has a large and fluctuating immigrant workforce that currently includes employees who speak nine different non-English languages. Concerns about health and safety, as well as the ability of employees to fill out the company's required documentation, led Haworth to ask Calgary's Bow Valley College to create an English in the Workplace Program.

Bow Valley instructors came to Haworth and gave interested employees both oral and written tests, explains Caroline Berglund, Haworth's senior program development consultant. A "surprising" 83 employees applied for training, says Berglund, and 23 were divided into two pilot classes, based on their level of English language competence.

The 16-week program began in February 2006, with classes held twice a week during working hours, either in the mornings or the afternoons depending on the employee's shift. Haworth covers all program costs, and employees are paid for the time spent in class.

Berglund says that from the beginning the company decided to offer the program to employees on a voluntary basis. "We made it very clear the program wasn't tied to performance; it was tied to getting better. We also benefit as a company, plus we are looking at it as a retention strategy."

The program is tailored to Haworth's workplace requirements, but also includes use of English in daily life outside of work. "You can view it as a funnel. In Week 1 we talk about general things such as workplace culture and how to make small talk, but as the classes go on they become more Haworth-specific."

Berglund says that since the program requires a substantial investment, the company may have to revisit its budget after completing the pilot classes. "But," she adds, "the likelihood is very strong that we'll continue the classes in some way."

**Lilydale Foods**

In the mid-1990s, the Edmonton-based poultry provider offered its foreign language workers on-site English training, and the classes proved to be a great success, says Christine Kavanagh, the company's health and safety claims coordinator. Attendance was voluntary and, although Lilydale paid for the instruction, employees were not paid for class time. "We thought of paying people to attend," explains Kavanagh.

"but then we asked ourselves where was the fairness to our employees who already spoke English?"

To make it as easy as possible for employees to attend, classes were held immediately before or after a shift, as well as on Saturdays.

Before the classes were introduced, Kavanagh personally explained to employees why the company was taking this initiative. "I explained it would make things easier for them both inside and outside of work."

There were two class levels, one for employees with some English skills and another for those who spoke and understood very little English. In addition to workplace information, much of it focusing on health and safety regulations and procedures, the classes dealt with outside-of-work activities such as banking and health care. "I don't have any evidence to this effect, but I think including help for these personal things made more people willing to come to the classes," Kavanagh says.

As a further incentive, Lilydale held a luncheon at the conclusion of the classes and presented successful participants with a certificate indicating they had completed the program.

The classes were discontinued almost a decade ago, says Kavanagh, because Lilydale was no longer hiring as many foreign workers. However, in today's tight job market, she says Lilydale is once again considering a similar program.

**Levi Strauss & Co.**

Blue jean and clothing manufacturer Levi Strauss offered English classes at its Edmonton plant from 1988 until the plant closed in 2004. Chris Tigeris, an occupational health nurse who was also responsible for safety at the plant during the time the English classes were offered, says that at times during that period almost 95 per cent of the company's floor staff were foreign-born, coming from countries that included Italy, the Ukraine, Vietnam, China and India.

Employees were not paid for taking the classes, says Tigeris, but for the first few years of the program they were given a bonus for successful completion. A private company offered the classes, four hours a week, for either 10 or 12 weeks. Levi Strauss & Co. decided to hold the classes on-site to make it easier for employees to attend.

Uniquely, the company didn't offer just one class, but six different levels of classes. "Employees could and did sign up for several different classes over the years," says Tigeris. The classes taught English both for the workplace and for more social situations. "They would be taught how to make phone calls to a doctor or how to read product labels." Sometimes, Tigeris adds, the instructor would take participants for walks, teaching them the English words for things they saw.

During the years the workplace English classes were held, Tigeris says participation varied, but averaged about 25 per cent of non-English speaking employees.

**Hunter Douglas**

As plant manager with the Hunter Douglas manufacturing facility in Edmonton in the 1990s, Bob Daly supervised many Vietnamese workers. He realized that although employees nodded and smiled when he gave them instructions and training, they often didn't understand. "They wanted to do the job right, and they didn't want to come across as negative by indicating they didn't understand."

> "Employees must go that extra mile to ensure their employees understand health and safety issues, whether or not they speak English."

Daly, who now works with Russel Metals Inc. in Edmonton, found a few solutions. One was to physically show employees what he wanted them to do. "Then I would get them to repeat what I showed them until I was satisfied they understood. When we were dealing with safety issues, things got more intense. I would demonstrate the task several times and get them to repeat it until I could be sure they were doing it safely." The other approach was to use the services of a Vietnamese employee who spoke several languages, including fluent English, as an interpreter with his fellow workers.

Daly believes companies should offer employees English language classes. "It's the right thing to do, and today there's more pressure on an employer to ensure employees are competent. Employers must go that extra mile to ensure their employees understand all the safety issues, whether or not they speak English."

"If you respect people, if you spend time training them," Daly says, "they'll be happy in their jobs. Then if they have a problem they will come and talk to you about it."

# HOW HEALTHY AND SAFE IS YOUR OFFICE?

**by Lee Craig**

Several years ago I walked into the production office of the company where I worked and tripped over the phone cord that my friend and co-worker Rob had so thoughtfully left strung across the doorway. I staggered and hit my knee on the sharp metal corner of the ancient desk, ripping my favourite pair of pants. There was blood. When Rob returned, I scolded him for his carelessness while silently berating myself for my Marx Brothers' clumsiness.

Although my story has an element of the ridiculous to it, most office injuries emphatically do not. Head injuries from falls, back and neck injuries, strain from poor ergonomic set-up of work stations, headaches from poor air circulation – these are only a few of the injuries and problems that can occur.

**"Bodily reaction injuries"**

The office environment could be described as "low hazard" compared to some workplaces where a limb or life could be lost. But Andy Smith, a workplace health consultant for the Personnel Administration Office (government of Alberta), finds this term misleading. "Offices have been called a low-hazard environment, but they're really not," he says. "Employees often work on a computer for an extended period of time, which is generally how people get hurt – as a result of repetitive strain and musculoskeletal injuries."

Smith points to carpal tunnel syndrome and compressed discs as examples of injuries that can severely affect employees' quality of life. "Those are lifetime injuries that will be with people forever, so they are quite profound."

Approximately 70 per cent of injuries occurring in offices are directly related to employees' work, says Ken Buchkowski, human resources advisor, Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Consequently, his department looks at how to avoid "bodily reaction injuries," as he terms them. "Not only do we look at ergonomic factors – how employees set up their workspaces – but we also do hazard assessments of where slips, trips and falls could occur," Buchkowski states.

Dennis Malayko, who has been the health and safety representative at the Alberta Union of Public Employees since 1977, says ensuring that employees have the proper number of breaks is often crucial to avoiding repetitive stress injuries. "Breaks from the equipment were a critical point for us. [In the late 1980s] we had union members who were in their 20s and unable to return to work as a result of their injuries. 'Old-age hands,' they called it. I'd see them driving home with their elbows because they couldn't even grip their steering wheels."

Malayko notes that two types of workers who may experience this kind of injury are court reporters and data entry clerks. Voice-recognition software may help court reporters avoid injury in future, he says, but he believes assembly-line data entry jobs are still a real problem. "Especially nowadays where the computer is telling your boss how many strokes you're doing per day. We train the employees to know what to look for in terms of early warning signals, like numbness and tingling in the fingers," he says. "Education plays a large part in the prevention of injuries."

Andy Smith says employees need to recognize it is not acceptable to have these types of pains, and they need to be aware of ways to prevent them. Both he and Malayko praise the Alberta government's Workplace Health &

Safety program, which offers excellent resources such as a new e-learning tool on office ergonomics.

Employees of Alberta Human Resources and Employment are given a choice of four styles of a proper ergonomic chair, Buchkowski says. If someone has a documented medical need, the department will provide the proper equipment such as a more appropriate style of chair.

Flat, glare-reducing computer screens and split keyboards that lessen repetitive stress injuries are other examples of preventive tools, says Buchkowski. He notes that this kind of equipment is becoming more common in offices across the province.

### Air quality

Beyond physical safety guidelines, there are factors such as air quality to consider as well. "I'm quite proud of our [Alberta's] indoor air quality standards, which are probably unique in Canada," Malayko says. He notes that a few years ago the Alberta Union of Public Employees noticed that many of their members were getting tired from insufficient air circulation in offices. So they worked with the government to set guidelines for carbon dioxide levels and air pollutants. An action level of 800 parts per million (ppm) of carbon dioxide was set, which is a good level, Malayko says. (The average outdoor level of carbon dioxide is about 380 ppm.)

These days, quite a few people realize an office job can present serious hazards that extend far beyond the often joked-about paper cuts. The title of a video in the resource list below says it well: "It's a jungle in there."

*Lee Craig is an Edmonton freelance writer and editor.*

RESOURCES

#### WEB LINKS

**www.mhsa.ab.ca/news_officesafety.html**
Alberta Manufacturer's Health and Safety Association

**www.pao.gov.ab.ca/health/doclist4.htm**
**www.pao.gov.ab.ca/health/flexible-work/telecommuting/home-office-safety-checklist.pdf**
Personnel Administration Office, Government of Alberta

**www.uleth.ca/hum/ohs/Help/officeErg.pdf**
Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta

**www.ab.ust.hk/sepo/check_list/Inspection/Office%20Safety/officepg1.htm**
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, China – checklist with photos

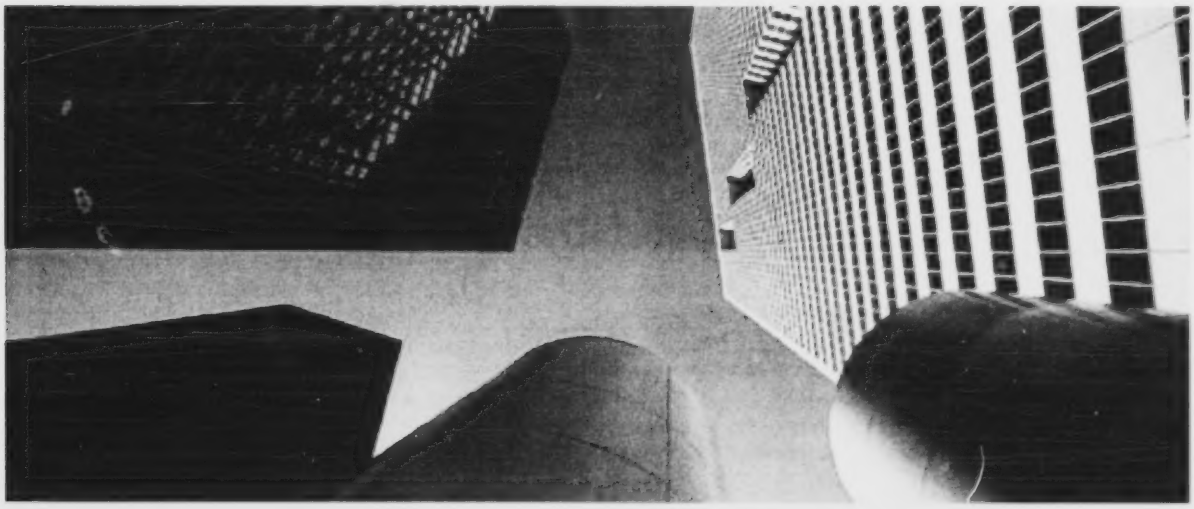
#### IN THE ALBERTA GOVERNMENT LIBRARY – LABOUR BUILDING

For contact information, see page 13.

**Office Safety: It's a Jungle in There**
The dangers in an office are hidden and subtle. This video deals with preventing injuries, controlling dangers and formulating emergency plans. (VC 0328)

**Safe Lifting in Office Environments**
Basic lifting program to educate employees in offices: how to lift safely, back facts and how to prevent lifting injuries. (VC 0257)

**Office Safety**
This video uses humour to emphasize the many dangers that office workers need to be aware of. (VC 0306)



**Back protection when lifting**

- When lifting an object from the floor, squat close to the load, rather than bending from the waist, and lift by straightening your legs.
- Instead of lifting from a seated position, stand and move your chair out of the way first.
- If you need to move a heavy object some distance, use a hand truck or cart.

**Moving about and using equipment**

- Be sure the pathway is clear before you walk.
- Carry objects in such a way that they don't block your vision.
- Close drawers completely after every use.
- While working on office equipment, concentrate on what you are doing. Be aware of the placement of your fingers, hair and clothing.
- Always use a stepladder for overhead reaching – never a chair.
- Report loose carpeting or damaged flooring.
- If you find yourself heading for a fall, remember to roll; don't reach. Trying to break your fall may result in a broken limb instead.

**Material storage**

- Always stack material in such a way that it will not fall over.
- Store heavy objects on lower shelves — but not on the floor, as lifting from the floor can cause a back injury.
- Store materials inside closed cabinets, files and lockers as much as possible.
- Keep aisles, corners and passageways unobstructed.
- Keep fire equipment, extinguishers, fire door exits and sprinkler heads unobstructed.

**Indoor air quality**

- Clean and maintain office equipment according to the manufacturer's recommendations. (Otherwise, the equipment may generate unhealthy levels of pollutants.) Vary work tasks to avoid using these machines excessively.
- Place photocopiers away from workers' desks.
- Ensure adequate ventilation when work is done that may generate air contaminants, for example, painting, pesticide spraying and heavy cleaning.

**Lighting and electrical equipment**

- Use diffuse lighting to reduce shadows, which could impair vision.
- Use task lamps as needed to supplement general office lighting.
- Secure electrical cords and wires away from walkways.

**Source:**
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – Office Safety Manual, www.cdc.gov/od/ohs/manual/ofcsfty.htm.

# ALBERTA SCHOOLS BEEF UP OH&S TRAINING

**by Allan Sheppard**

Alberta is riding the crest of a boom economy. It seems anyone who wants a job can choose from more than one, and often with high wages. Things can look especially good if you're young. Young Albertans have many opportunities and inducements to join the part-time or full-time workforce, and lack of experience is not the barrier it once was. But such opportunity also brings challenges. Statistics show that young and new workers face a significantly greater chance of injury than older, experienced workers.

**Ministries join forces**

Alberta Human Resources and Employment and Alberta Education are addressing these challenges through their Work Safe Alberta Joint Education Project. Sharon Chadwick, senior manager, workplace health and safety program planning, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, says the goal of the joint project is "to prevent work-related injury and illness in young workers by improving their knowledge of workplace health and safety **before** they enter the workplace."

Workplace health and safety experts have known for years that young and new workers have an increased likelihood of being injured at work, says Sharon Chadwick. "When Work Safe Alberta was set up in 2002, we identified increased awareness of workplace health and safety in kindergarten to grade 12 as a priority," she says. "Our current partnership with Alberta Education flows from that commitment."

The Joint Education Project is set up to help schools and teachers build awareness and promote a culture of workplace health and safety by providing appropriate materials and training, including:

- a Work Safe teacher resource binder and teacher toolkit (handouts, posters and publications)
- a Work Safe Passport students can use to keep a record of their health and safety training
- workshops for teachers on Work Safe resources and materials jointly delivered by Alberta Human Resources and Employment and Alberta Education

The Work Safe Passport, a key feature of the Joint Education Project, contains a cumulative record of all health and safety training students receive, both at school and later. Passport holders will be encouraged to keep and update their passports throughout their careers, and to show them to potential employers.

Eight schools, located in Calgary, Edmonton, Edson, High Level, Namao and Consort, are currently field testing the resources and procedures, and plans are to make them available to all Alberta senior high schools in September 2006.

**Alberta's OH&S curriculum**

Don Shaw, program manager, off-campus and safety education, Alberta Education, says workplace health and safety is not taught as a specific subject in Alberta schools. "Teachers are encouraged to take opportunities to talk about safety in all courses and at all grade levels."

In kindergarten to grade 9, health and life skills courses cover many aspects of workplace health and safety. Health and safety topics also make up about 25 per cent of the content of a senior high course called Career Transitions 1010. Three additional career transitions courses, CTR 1210, CTR 2210 and CTR 3210, each offer an additional 25 hours of health and safety instruction. As well, career and technology studies courses for junior and senior high school students have health and safety components.

**Project well received**

Ronan MacDonald, a teacher at High Level Public School, is an enthusiastic participant in the Joint Education Project field test. "This is a comprehensive approach to teaching workplace health and safety. It covers the three key elements of job safety: hazard identification, evaluating risk potential, and ways to safely control hazards and protect yourself while completing required tasks. And the passport is an excellent tool, especially up here in High Level, where most of our students work."

"It has been a good relationship," adds Don Shaw. "Alberta Human Resources and Employment has been helpful to us in every way. We [the two departments] understand each other better, and that's good for young people going into the workforce."

**For more information,** call the Workplace Innovation & Continuous Improvement Branch of Alberta Human Resources and Employment at (780) 644-1500 or Don Shaw at Alberta Education, (780) 415-8191. Call toll free from anywhere in Alberta by dialing 310-0000.

*Allan Sheppard is a freelance writer and researcher who currently commutes between homes in Atlin, B.C, and Edmonton.*

## RESOURCES

### WEB LINKS

**www.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/workers/education.asp**
Work Safe Alberta Joint Education Project Overview

### VIDEOS

**Dying to Work**
W-Five reporter, Wei Chen, examines the perils of teen labour and follows a father who campaigns for tougher safety rules and tries to make teenagers aware of the risks. (VC 0345) Available online at www.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/workers/dyingtowork.asp.

**Joe Who?**
An innovative play written and performed by students of McNair Secondary School in Richmond, B.C., offers a unique perspective on the challenges related to alarmingly high injury rates among young workers. (VC 0417)

**Lost Youth: Four Stories of Injured Young Workers**
Four young people and their parents speak from personal experience about the consequences that serious workplace incidents can have for young workers. (VC 0365)

**Safety First**
In 1994, seven young workers died in Ontario workplaces. The Industrial Accident Prevention Association and the Workers Health and Safety Center believe these deaths could have been prevented. (VC 0367)

## THE YOUNGER THE WORKER, THE GREATER THE RISK

Statistics and research show a consistent pattern that relates workplace injury rates to the ages of workers.

- Workers under the age of 25 are 33 per cent more likely to be injured on the job than older workers.
- Every year in Alberta, approximately 7,600 workers aged 15 to 24 report injuries on the job. In 2004, 6,979 young workers were hurt badly enough to miss work beyond the day of the injury. Given increases in the number of young people in the workforce, these numbers suggest a consistent rate of injury for young workers.
- Between 2000 and 2004, 24 workers between 15 and 24 died in workplace incidents, and an additional 25 died in work-related motor vehicle incidents.
- Over 50 per cent of incidents involving young workers occur during their first six months on the job.
- Because they know that one of the ways for a worker to be safe on the job is to be aware of health and safety responsibilities, workplace health and safety experts encourage workers to ask questions. Unfortunately, young workers tend not to ask questions, perhaps because they want to make a good impression.
- Young workers get hurt when they do jobs they aren't trained to do and/or when they don't have adequate supervision.
- Over 50 per cent of young workers reported they had not received training before starting a new task.

**Sources:**
Work Safe Alberta and Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta websites.

## RESEARCH NOTES

Curtis Breslin and research colleagues at the Institute for Work & Health in Toronto, www.iwh.on.ca, are studying workplace injuries in young workers. Breslin notes that, while overall workplace injury rates declined in Canada during the 1990s, the rates for young workers did not decline as significantly as those for older workers. Young men aged 15 to 34 and young women aged 20 to 24 seem to remain at greater risk than others.

Breslin and his colleagues say it's not clear whether injury rates for young workers reflect characteristics and attitudes of the workers (particularly young men) or characteristics of the work, including the nature of the jobs young workers tend to do and the training they receive. They recommend further research on this question.

# PREVENTING LOWER BACK PAIN

**by Ray Cislo**

As many as 80 per cent of us will experience back pain at some time in our lives. Because this complaint is so prevalent, you might think it's something you have to endure, like the common cold. Not so. There are steps you can take to prevent injury – in particular, you can reduce, if not eliminate, the manual handling of materials at work (see sidebar). This goal can be achieved by:

- redesigning the work process
- having materials handling equipment do the work

### Causes of lower back pain

The most common cause of lower back pain is overuse, which strains the bones of the spinal column and the tendons, muscles and other tissues that support the spine and allow it to function. Motions that appear harmless can strain and damage tissues if they are repeated hundreds or thousands of times daily. Other causes include injuries, and disease or age-related changes that reduce or limit lower back function.

Research shows that persons who already have lower back pain and continue to perform work that involves lifting are especially at risk. But don't be fooled into thinking that only heavy loads are a problem. Lifting an object as light as a pencil from the floor can result in lower back pain if the lift involves twisting or an awkward body position. Another risk factor is excessive body weight, which places an extra load on the spine.

### Other research findings

- Although people of all ages can have lower back pain, recent research shows that it occurs most often during the teenage years, with genetics being a strong determining factor.
- Lower back injuries at work occur most often in the morning. Researchers believe the tissues supporting the spinal column are at their most flexible early in the day, so they are more easily overextended or overused at that time.
- A lower back injury may not be noticed initially. Many people who are injured have stiffness and a reduced range of motion; pain may or may not be present. In many cases, the stiffness and pain go away over time without medical treatment.
- Maintaining near-normal activity levels and avoiding bed rest are key factors in recovery.

*Ray Cislo, P.Eng., B.Sc.(H.K.), is a safety engineering specialist at Workplace Policy and Standards, Alberta Human Resources and Employment.*

**WEB LINKS**

www.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/publications/pdf/bcl005.pdf
Seven Myths about Back Pain

www.gov.ab.ca/hre/whs/publications/pdf/bcl003.pdf
Back Care and Lifting, Part 3

| | |
|---|---|
| Lifting and lowering | Eliminate task completely or have all objects at working height<br><br>Increase the weight and size of the load (so that it can't be lifted) and then use equipment to move it<br><br>Reduce the weight and size of the load<br><br>Pushing and pulling – this is easier on the body than lifting and lowering |
| Carrying | Eliminate task completely<br><br>Use a conveyor belt, cart or other equipment to move the load<br><br>Reduce the weight and size of the load<br><br>Pushing and pulling – this is easier on the body than carrying |
| Pushing and pulling | Eliminate task completely<br><br>Use a conveyor belt, cart or other equipment to move the load<br><br>Reduce the weight and size of the load |

**Source:**
"Extra-Ordinary" Ergonomics by Karl Kroemer, CRC Press, 2006.

# GOT BACK PAIN?

## Activity helps you get back @ it!

**by Naomi Côté, WCB-Alberta**

Back pain is a condition experienced by more than 80 per cent of adults. Years ago, back pain sufferers were prescribed bed rest, but health care professionals now know that activity is the key to a safe recovery. Even when you have pain, it's important to keep moving. You can:

- enjoy the beautiful scenery while cycling or walking your dog
- treat your joints gently by swimming or doing water exercises
- get outside for a healthy, vigorous walk
- get moving at home with an exercise DVD

Activity is good for your back because it:

- develops your muscles
- keeps you flexible
- strengthens your bones
- enhances fitness
- releases natural chemicals that reduce pain

*For more information, visit www.wcb.ab.ca/back@it.*

# PTI TRAVCO

PTI Travco has brought safety to an all-time high in only four short years.

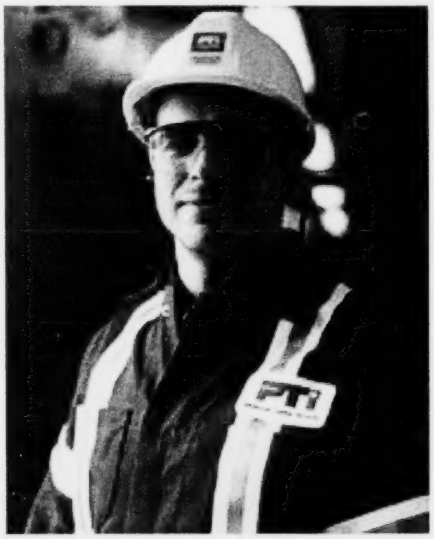


Photo courtesy WCB-Alberta

**by Dana Kroetsch**

"There are a million good reasons to be safe in the workplace," explains Robert Stocki, vice-president of manufacturing, PTI Group. "The human factor aside, the economic factor is a no-brainer. When our company submits a bid or proposal for a job, the first thing our clients look at is our health and safety record and history."

While this shining aspect of the company now secures many projects and repeat customers, this was not always the case. "Our employees design, manufacture, transport and install modular structures in remote regions around the world. Whether they are on the manufacturing plant floor or at the top of a crane, the potential exposure to danger can be significant if not managed properly," says Stocki. "And to say that our safety record had a rough start would be an understatement. It was dismal at best."

Using PTI Group's manufacturing division (PTI Travco Modular Structures) as a pilot project, PTI Group made a corporate decision to turn their health and safety record around by emphasizing prevention. By adding a senior safety coordinator and dumping their original health and safety program and manual to rebuild them from the ground up, PTI Travco has brought safety to an all-time high in only four short years – despite having tripled their personnel.

"To get everyone on board," Stocki says, "it was necessary to make over our culture along with our health and safety program. Workers from all levels of the organization had the opportunity to provide input towards creating the new program, and they feel connected to its success."

PTI Travco also worked with the Alberta Construction Safety Association to obtain a Certificate of Recognition. Then the division registered in the Partners in Injury Reduction program, which officially recognized the company's health and safety accomplishments of 2004. Under the guidance of the ACSA, they earned a PIR refund of almost $100,000.

### Rewards and incentives

PIR rebates are reinvested in the health and safety program through employee rewards and incentives, which are revised regularly to keep things fresh. The Individual Safety Recognition Awards have become a very popular initiative, Stocki says.

"Over the course of a year, we monitor how many 'safe hours' are completed by each employee based on the number of incident-free hours worked. Incidents result in a deduction of safe hours corresponding to the severity of the incident, but those requiring simple First Aid do not affect totals because we don't want to discourage reporting. Prizes are awarded annually to each individual. We have some employees who have worked in excess of 15,000 safe hours."

### Prevention and training

A large component of PTI Travco's health and safety program revolves around prevention and training. They run new-hire orientations and site-specific training at each project site tailored to the new work environment. Post-orientation training places new employees with veterans until they become comfortable with job tasks. Safety meetings,

a frequent occurrence at Travco, offer employees the opportunity to discuss issues.

Employee feedback is also directly solicited. While continuous training and education is offered through monthly meetings focused on specific topics, results from a recent survey have pushed the company in the direction of more detailed and specialized training. For example, PTI Travco offers a formal course on incident investigation to supervisors, and is currently developing a series of modules for front line workers.

Stocki is proud of the huge steps the company has made in workplace health and safety. The frequency and severity of incidents have lowered significantly, and they are beginning to reach a plateau.

"We used to just get the job done – now we're getting the job done safely," he beams. "Ten years down the road, the only thing I want to see is the occasional band-aid, and nothing else. That would make me very happy."

The Partners in Injury Reduction program offers premium rate discounts to employers who have implemented successful health, safety and disability management programs and have achieved or maintained the Certificate of Recognition standards set by Alberta Human Resources and Employment and their certifying partner.

For more information, contact WCB-Alberta at (780) 498-7936.

**Contact us any time**
For occupational health and safety information and assistance, or to order Workplace Health & Safety publications, phone the Contact Centre at 1-866-415-8690 toll free in Alberta (415-8690 in Edmonton and area) or visit www.whs.gov.ab.ca/expert.

WORK SAFE ALBERTA

**Sign up for Workplace Health & Safety news**
To be notified by e-mail of all new Workplace Health & Safety website postings, sign up for a FREE subscription service through www.whs.gov.ab.ca/subscribe.asp.

**Alberta Government Library - Labour Building Site**
To review the large selection of occupational health and safety information materials available through the Alberta government, go to www.gov.ab.ca/hre/library/index.asp.

To borrow materials, either contact your local library and make your requests through the inter-library loan system or visit the Alberta Government Library:

**3rd floor, 10808-99 Avenue**
**Edmonton, AB T5K 0G5**

**Library phone** (780) 427-8533
**Audio-Visual Services phone** (780) 427-4671

To reach either of the above numbers toll-free in Alberta, dial 310-0000 followed by the area code and phone number.

**Library fax** (780) 422-0084

Workplace Health & Safety is an Alberta Human Resources and Employment program that falls under the jurisdiction of Minister Mike Cardinal.

# WHAT IMPROVEMENTS HAVE YOU MADE AT YOUR WORKPLACE?

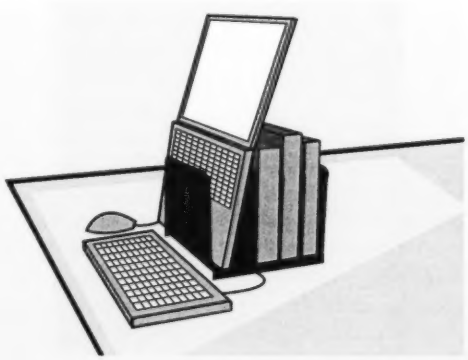
If you've found a solution worth sharing, please send it to ray.cislo@gov.ab.ca

## LAPTOP AS MONITOR

**The Problem**
Laptop monitor displays on a desk are too low, resulting in a stooped posture and poor body position. Why tolerate an uncomfortable position if it can be easily fixed?

**The Solution**
Using bookends and some books as ballast, position the laptop as shown. An accessory keyboard and mouse will be required

**Benefits**
This configuration offers improved comfort and a reduced likelihood of neck and shoulder pain.



## PALLET LIFTER

**The Problem**
Loading packaged cartons onto pallets over an eight-hour shift may involve frequent bending below knee height, which creates a risk of injuring your back, legs, shoulders and/or arms.

**The Solution**
By means of fitted springs that require no external power or air supply, pallet lifters gradually lower or raise the pallet as product is added or removed, to keep the working surface at an ideal height. Pallet lifters come in mobile or stationary units rated up to 2,000 kg.

**Benefits**
Pallet lifters reduce the risk of injury by eliminating the need for repeated bending.

# PARTNERSHIPS NEWS

## SCHOOL BOARDS JOIN COR PROGRAM

The school board industry sector joined the Partnerships in Health and Safety program in 2005, and the following boards have earned their Certificates of Recognition:

- Calgary Roman Catholic Separate School District
- Calgary Board of Education
- Parkland School Division #70 (Maintenance Facility)

## WHY GET YOUR COR THIS YEAR?

To increase employer participation in the Partnerships in Health and Safety program, the Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta has made two changes. Effective immediately, **first-time** Certificate of Recognition holders will receive a minimum financial rebate of 10 per cent for the first year of the program. In addition, they will receive the rebate in the same year in which they achieve the COR (these rebates were previously paid in May of the following year).

*For more information, visit www.wcb.ab.ca or contact WCB-Alberta at 1-866-922-9221 (toll free from anywhere in Alberta) or at contactcentre@wcb.ab.ca.*

## SUSPENDED/REVOKED CORS

Has a Certificate of Recognition ever been cancelled or revoked? Yes, but it is not a frequent occurrence.

While the Certificate of Recognition program consistently helps employers minimize workplace incidents and serious injuries, most jobs still pose varying degrees of risk to workers. Risk can be minimized through engineering controls, safe work practices and procedures, personal protective equipment and education. Even with all these control measures in place, however, undesirable or tragic workplace events can still happen.

Some COR holders have experienced a serious incident, have failed to comply with legislative requirements or have not maintained an effective health and safety management system. Because the credibility of the Certificate of Recognition is paramount, the Partnerships team has developed the following policy to address these situations.

- When a COR holder experiences a fatality, the manager of Partnerships will notify the employer in writing that their COR is under review, and that an external audit must be conducted and passed within three months. The Certifying Partner will be notified and will review the audit to ensure it meets all the Partnerships Quality Assurance Standards.

- When a COR holder fails to address OH&S issues or is in non-compliance with OH&S orders, Partnerships will inform the Certifying Partner that the COR is under review. Senior company personnel, Partnerships representatives and, when possible, the Certifying Partner will meet to discuss the situation and attempt to develop an action plan or another mutually agreeable plan for addressing or resolving the issues. If the meeting fails to produce action or results, the COR might be revoked.

## TARGETED EMPLOYER PROGRAM, 2005-06

Members of the Partnerships team are planning to visit 300 employers who have a lost time claim rate above the provincial average. The steps involved in this process are:

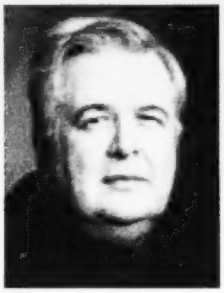
1. A Partnerships consultant will meet with the employer to discuss the benefits of developing and implementing or improving their health and safety management system.
2. Occupational health and safety officers will review the employer's lost time claim history and conduct a series of work-site inspections to identify any non-compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act, Regulation and Code.
3. Depending on the severity of the situation, orders may be written and compliance dates assigned for having the variance(s) corrected.

Partnerships in HEALTH and SAFETY

Partnerships in Health and Safety is a non-regulatory, province-wide injury prevention program sponsored cooperatively by government, labour and industry. The program offers:

- tools to implement a health and safety management system
- guidance in applying for a Certificate of Recognition (COR)
- potential for premium refunds from the Workers' Compensation Board-Alberta

For more information, call 1-866-415-8690 toll free in Alberta or 415-8690 in Edmonton and area. Or visit www.whs.gov.ab.ca/partners.



## LIES, DAMNED LIES AND STATISTICS

**by Bob Christie**

One of Mark Twain's favorite expressions was, "There are lies, damned lies and statistics." He wasn't far wrong. Any student of statistics knows that you can prove almost anything, depending on the way you slice and dice the statistical information available.

There are lots of statistics on the Internet. But you don't see a lot of incident frequency and incident severity statistics. Sure, you can find individual references to health and safety statistics, usually as proof of great improvement or a need for improvement. For example, in the spring of 2005 an Internet article about the newly formed Retail Safety Council of Alberta highlighted the need for concerted effort and improvement by pointing to over 7,000 incidents under the categories of Overexertion, Struck by Object, Fall and Sprain/Strain. The article compared the retail safety record to mining (659 incidents) and construction (5,349 incidents).*

Now, there is no question that retail needs to pull up its socks, but there is a difference – in cause, effects and prevention – between being hit by a box of fashion scarves and being hit by a pallet of bricks. It is also a little unfair to compare the huge size of the retail workforce to the relatively small and specialized number of mine workers in the province. Most importantly, numbers say nothing of the pain, disability and lost productivity that lie behind them.

It would, of course, be a mistake to minimize the huge and significantly successful efforts of the mining and construction sectors. Neither should it be assumed that the Retail Safety Council of Alberta is in a panic, thinking the sky is falling. There is certainly a need in the retail industry that can and should be addressed. One must, however, take look carefully at how statistics are used, whether they come off the Internet, from Statistics Canada or from some other source.

* As reported in WCB Insight Online, Spring 2005, www.wcb.ab.ca/pdfs/insight/spring_2005_insight_print.pdf.

*Bob Christie is a partner at Christie Communications Ltd., a multimedia development company in Edmonton. Bob supplies most of the web link resources for the articles in this magazine.*

## CANCER AND THE WORKPLACE: SAFETY MESSAGES FOR WORKERS

**Check your work site cancer-prevention habits. There are many ways to protect yourself. (See also the "Cancer and Workplace" article in our January 2006 issue.)**

- Minimize exposure at the workplace. Avoid skin contact with chemicals and avoid breathing chemical vapours.
- Know the name, chemical composition and health effects of all substances you work with.
- Get a copy of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).
- Wear personal protective equipment and follow instructions on correct usage.
- Insist that your work environment be designed to prevent exposure to toxic substances.
- Report every spill, leak and accident immediately.
- Talk to your employer about any hazards (for example, radiation or chemicals) that you need to be aware of.
- Participate in training and monitoring programs provided by your employer.
- Keep a list of all the jobs and industries you have worked in. It will help if you need to file an occupational disease claim.
- Wash thoroughly with soap and water before eating and after using the washroom. Wash as soon as possible after finishing work and preferably before coming home.
- Immediately change clothes soiled or soaked with chemicals to prevent contact with skin.
- Do not bring hazards home. If you take work clothes home to be cleaned, put them in a plastic bag, and wash them separately from other laundry.

Adapted from *Cancer and the Workplace,* Alberta Cancer Board, 2005, www.cancerboard.ab.ca/cancer/cancer_online.html.

# WORKPLACE FATALITIES

## September - December 2005

The following information about deaths caused by work-related incidents or exposure is published to remind readers of the importance of workplace health and safety. In many cases the investigation into these fatalities is continuing. Final investigation reports are filed at the Alberta Government Library – Labour Building site and can be reviewed there or at **www.whs.gov.ab.ca/fatalities.**

To protect personal privacy, the fatality descriptions do not include the names of the deceased.

Most work-related incident fatalities that fall under provincial jurisdiction are investigated by Workplace Health & Safety. In general, highway traffic, farm, disease or heart attack fatalities are not investigated.

### The following fatalities have been or are being investigated.

**A 27-year-old painter** died from crush injuries to the chest after being caught and trapped between the control panel of a manlift and an overhead beam.

**A 54-year-old truck driver** who was operating a self-loading logging truck was asphyxiated when a log fell on him.

**A 21-year-old labourer** died from crush injuries to the head and face after being caught and trapped between the control panel of a manlift and an overhead beam. The worker had been on the job for a month and had been operating the manlift for one week.

**A 23-year-old first-year apprentice crane operator** died from injuries sustained from being pinned between a moving load on a crane and another stationary crane. The worker had one year of experience.

**A 49-year-old labourer** who was struck in the chest by a laminated wooden beam was admitted to hospital and died four days later.

**A 44-year-old truck driver** who was standing between the rear of a dump truck and its attached trailer was run over when the driver of the truck pulled away.

## THE LAST RESORT

### Reporting on Recent Convictions Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act

**Employer**
Tri-City Drilling Inc.

**Incident**
On January 13, 2003, a worker was fatally injured when a blowout preventer stack broke away from its mounting and fell, crushing the worker.

**Violation**
On October 3, 2005, Tri-City Drilling Inc. pleaded guilty of failing to take all reasonable steps to ensure equipment was contained or restrained to eliminate potential danger [Section 67, General Safety Regulation]. One charge under the Occupational Health and Safety Act [section 2(1)(a)(i)] was dropped.

**Fine**
Tri-City Drilling Inc. received a total penalty of $101,500: a fine of $10,000 plus a $1,500 victim fine surcharge; and a payment of $90,000 to Enform [a merger of Petroleum Industry Training Service and the Canadian Petroleum Safety Council] for safety-related training.

Return Undeliverable Canadian Addresses to:
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Alberta Human Resources and Employment
Workplace Health & Safety and
Employment Standards Compliance
10th Floor, South Tower, Capital Health Centre
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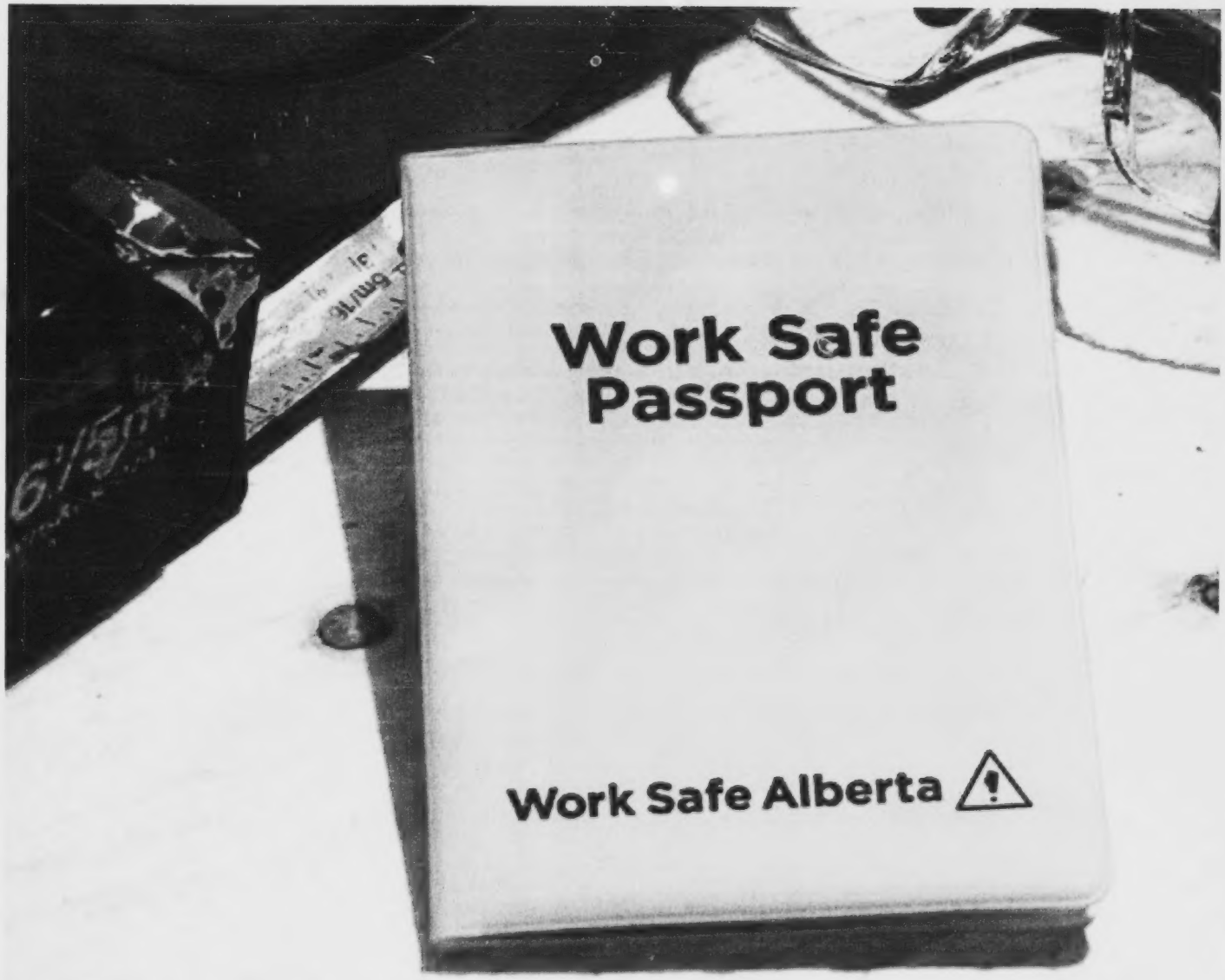


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